

**GENERAL SYNOD 2025
RESOLUTION**

Resolution Number C002

Subject: Emancipation Sunday – The Last Sunday of July

Moved By: The Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields

Seconded By: The Rt. Rev. Riscylla Shaw

Be it resolved that this General Synod:

1. Formally designate the last Sunday in July as Emancipation Sunday.
2. Direct the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Coordinating Committee to develop liturgical and educational resources to support parishes in observing this day through worship, reflection, and community engagement.
3. Actively support initiatives that address anti-Black racism, both within our ecclesial structures and in society at large.
4. Encourage dioceses to engage in dialogue with Black Anglican communities to ensure that this observance is meaningful and impactful.
5. Place on record its recognition of the Black Anglicans Coordinating Committee of the Diocese of Toronto which, for over 25 years, was a prophetic voice in the church and community advocating for the full inclusion of Black Anglicans in the life of our church, and has now been succeeded by the Black Anglicans of Canada, a national organization, from coast to coast to coast, whose *“mission is to increase the participation, representation, empowerment, and belongingness of Black People in lay and ordained leadership roles in the full life of the Anglican Church of Canada, and to develop partnerships with Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) and other oppressed peoples.”*

Source: The Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields

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Does this motion contain within it any financial implications? Yes **No**

If yes, has the General Synod Expenditures Committee considered the implications? Yes No

Does this motion contain within it any staffing implications? Yes **No**

EXPLANATORY NOTE/BACKGROUND

The Transatlantic Slave Trade forcibly displaced millions of African people, subjecting them to unimaginable suffering. While legal emancipation in the British Empire began with the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, the legacy of enslavement persists in the systemic racism, discrimination, and marginalization that Black people continue to face in Canada and beyond.

The Anglican Church has a complex history in relation to slavery. While some Anglicans advocated for abolition, others were complicit in the structures of oppression. The Anglican Church of Canada has acknowledged its past complicity in racist systems and has taken steps toward justice and reconciliation. On June 8, 2020, our Bishops wrote in a statement, *“The Anglican Church of Canada has committed itself to confronting racism in its own life and to acknowledging the place of racism and colonialism in our own nation. That commitment needs to be renewed daily”*. The statement concludes, *“we re-commit ourselves and our Dioceses to confront the sin of racism in all its forms and the patterns of silence and self-congratulation, which have silenced the experiences of people of colour, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of this land.”* The Church also endorsed the United Nations-sponsored *“International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).”*

History notwithstanding, Black Anglicans have been making their contribution to the life and ministry of the Anglican Church of Canada as far and as much as they were allowed. In his 1992 study, "Ministry in a Multicultural Society," Dr. Romney Moseley examined the Anglican Church of Canada's engagement with cultural diversity and identified several key issues:

1. **Cultural Identity and Integration:** Moseley emphasized the importance of recognizing and affirming the cultural identities of all members. He advocated for integrating diverse cultural expressions within the church's worship and community life to foster inclusivity.
2. **Leadership Representation:** He highlighted the underrepresentation of minority groups in leadership positions within the church. Moseley recommended proactive measures to ensure leadership reflects the church's diverse membership.
3. **Theological Reflection:** Moseley called for deeper theological engagement with multiculturalism, encouraging the church to develop theological perspectives that embrace cultural diversity as central to its mission.
4. **Policy Development on Racism and Multiculturalism:** He urged the church to adopt clear policies addressing racism and promoting multiculturalism, reflecting a commitment to justice and equality.

These insights and recommendations were later published in "No Longer Strangers: Ministry in a Multicultural Society," serving as a foundational document for the Church's Multicultural Policy (1992). This document was a catalyst for the work of the Black Anglicans Coordinating Committee which, for over 25 years, was a prophetic voice in the church and community advocating for the full inclusion of Black Anglicans in the life of our church. It has now been succeeded by the Black Anglicans of Canada, a national organization, from coast to coast to coast, whose *“mission is to increase the participation, representation, empowerment, and belongingness of Black People in lay and ordained leadership roles in the full life of the Anglican Church of Canada, and to develop partnerships with Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) and other oppressed peoples”*.

Many churches and civic organizations around the world have recognized Emancipation Day on August 1st as a time to remember and reflect on this history. In addition to several observances, including Black History Month, several Anglican parishes and communities have joined in the liturgical and other celebrations of Emancipation Day. We believe that as part of its ongoing work of reconciliation and inclusion and to give life to the aspirations of our Bishops, this General Synod should dedicate a Sunday, Emancipation Sunday, the Last Sunday in July, in our liturgical calendar to engage the whole Church in prayer, reflection, repentance, and renewed commitment to racial justice.

Work done to date by the Council of the General Synod

At the June 2020 meeting of the Council of the General Synod a resolution was passed establishing a Dismantling Racism Task Force to address systemic racism within the structures and processes of the Anglican Church of Canada. This report was received at the 2023 session of General Synod. In June 2024, the Council of the General Synod approved the terms of reference for the National Advisory Council of Dismantling Racism. The mandate of

the Advisory Council is to “conduct an initial and ongoing review of church structures, culture, policies, and practices pertaining to racism and anti-racism”; and to “develop and implement a national action plan to move from promoting diversity to living out full inclusion, equity, and belonging at all levels of the church (in both membership and leadership).”

We note that the Council of the General Synod has partnered with the Black Anglicans of Canada in their work to further the aspirations of Black Anglicans and to enable the Church to accomplish the recommendations of the Task Force.

What is Hoped For!

1. The Church must take an active role in acknowledging and addressing the lasting impact of slavery and systemic racism on Black communities within and beyond the Anglican Church of Canada.
2. Many Black Anglicans feel invisible or marginalized within the Church’s structures and ministries. A designated Emancipation Sunday would provide a tangible affirmation of their place within the Church.
3. Repentance must be accompanied by concrete action. A day of commemoration and reflection can serve as a catalyst for ongoing conversations and commitments to racial justice.

Biblical and Theological Basis

The Scriptures call us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). Jesus proclaims release to the captives and sets the oppressed free (Luke 4:18). The Apostle Paul reminds us that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free (Galatians 3:28), calling us to dismantle the barriers that separate us from one another.

At the heart of this petition is the Reign of God, which calls for justice, liberation, and the restoration of human dignity. The Reign of God is not merely a distant hope but a present reality that we are called to live into, embodying Christ’s mission to bring good news to the poor and freedom to the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). By designating Emancipation Sunday, the Anglican Church of Canada aligns itself with God’s vision of a reconciled world where all people, regardless of race or background, are affirmed as bearers of the divine image and called to participate fully in the life of the Church.

We end with the words of former Primate, The Most Reverend Linda Nicholls, *“As Anglicans, we are committed to the Marks of Mission including ‘To seek to transform unjust structures of society.’ Emancipation Day calls us all to action. We must act to address the realities of racism, discrimination, and exclusion in our parishes, in our communities, and in our country. As a Church, we look forward to the recommendations of the Dismantling Racism Task Force, calling us to specific action to move along our journey to true emancipation for all.”* (A Reflection in July 2022)

The establishment of Emancipation Sunday would be a significant step in the Anglican Church of Canada’s ongoing journey toward justice, healing, and reconciliation. It would provide a sacred space for remembrance, repentance, and renewal, affirming the dignity of Black Anglicans and recommitting the Church to the work of racial justice. We pray that the General Synod will give this resolution its approval.

PROCEDURE FOR ADOPTION (G)

In the normal course, an ordinary motion must be passed by a majority of the members of General Synod present and voting together.

Six members of General Synod may, prior to the question being put, require a vote by Orders, with a majority of each Order being necessary to pass.

If a question passes on a Vote by Orders, any six members (two from each of three different dioceses) may immediately before the next item of business require a vote to be taken by dioceses. A motion passes if a majority (or a tie) of dioceses vote in favour.

Source: Sections 4 and 5 of the [Declaration of Principles](#) and sections 18, 19 and 20 of the [Rules of Order and Procedure](#).